UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of:	*	
	*	
GROUNDING OF THE FAST FERRY FINEST in SANDY HOOK BAY ON JANUARY 4, 2001	*	Docket No. DCA-01-MM-015

INTERVIEW OF:

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, ENGINEER

PRESENT:

THEODORE WHITE

ORIGINAL

PROCEEDINGS

MR. WOODY: Christopher Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: Middle initial?

MR. JOHNSON: Ronald, R.

MR. WOODY: R for Ronald.

And your job title?

MR. JOHNSON: Engineer.

MR. WOODY: Could you start and just give me a little bit of history of background and how you got into marine field?

MR. JOHNSON: I started at New York Waterway in 1995, engineer. That was my first experience with marine engineering. And then I came here after that in '96, I have been doing that, started out on deck, but got into the engineering part of the business just helping the head engineer. And then I just came over here full time. That would be engineering, you know, two and a half, three years ago. I also worked for Detroit Diesel for a couple of months.

MR. WOODY: Detroit Diesel, was that a company that fixes diesel engines --

MR. JOHNSON: Detroit Diesel is like a specific, does marine, everything.

MR. WOODY: Cars, trucks.

MR. JOHNSON: Everything, yes, buses, heavy machinery.

MR. WHITE: You worked for the manufacturer?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. I worked with my father. He owned a garage. Did a lot on cars. So, I got into the --

MR. WOODY: You have been with Fast, New York Fast Ferry --

MR. JOHNSON: December '96.

MR. WOODY: December '96.

And how long have you been engineer on the boat? You alluded to it, but --

MR. JOHNSON: Two and a half years.

MR. WOODY: Two and a half years.

Okay. What kind of schedule do you work?

MR. JOHNSON: I work from 4:30 in the morning to approximately, it depends on, like the finish time is when the last run and sometimes, one day it is 7:30 and other days 8:30, you know, we rest during the day.

MR. WOODY: All right. And how many days on duty are you per week?

MR. JOHNSON: I do between three and four.

MR. WOODY: Three or four.

MR. JOHNSON: On the boat. And usually I will come in on Saturday to tidy up work that can't be done

on the week --

MR. WOODY: All right. Can you think of any questions you wanted to ask about Chris' background?

MR. WHITE: Do you have any licenses?

MR. JOHNSON: I have a 100 ton master license.

MR. WHITE: Where did you get that from?

MR. JOHNSON: Post --

MR. WHITE: Well, yeah, where did you get the experience for it?

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, at the time here when I first started here, I started on deck, worked my way up to mate, and I acquired the license before I was a mate, that is where I got the time. And at Waterway, I was running on the boats, too, so, I acquired sea time on that.

MR. WHITE: -- Northwestern, New York Waterway.

MR. JOHNSON: New York Waterway.

MR. WHITE: What kind of --

MR. JOHNSON: What kind of motor is there?

MR. WHITE: No, no, what kind of boats?

MR. JOHNSON: They were 96 foot passenger ferry, 400 passenger, caterpillar diesel, plus they had a couple of other boats, smaller ones.

MR. WOODY: Where did they run to and from?

MR. JOHNSON: They run from Weehawken, New York City, right across the Hudson. They also have runs that go to down by what is -- Dock, St. George there, Battery. They have a bunch of runs down there. When I was there it was mainly from Weehawken to 38th Street.

MR. WHITE: Okay. Tell us generally what you do when, like what time do you have -- Let's say you are getting under way and then what is the process that you do as an engineer?

MR. JOHNSON: As an engineer I pretty much stay in the engine room, making sure I have proper water flow for coolant. Take a look over the back, make sure the lines are all right, no oil is coming out anywhere, ice break in the line. Listen to the captain, if he tells me the temperature is getting hot, but I can see that in the engine room. When we start getting to the ice, I am down in the engine room monitoring the system with the motor -- There was two of us, I was in one, and the big guy, Scott, was in the other one. I was monitoring the port engine.

MR. WOODY: Did you have any -- during the time?

MR. JOHNSON: No, everything was running A-okay. When I was in the engine room, I just felt, you

know, a couple of shimmies there. I thought it was just thick ice, you know, saw everything was running well, because I usually pop in and out to make sure the lines are all right, nothing wrong, you know, with the boat and we were just --

MR. WOODY: When you say lines, what kind of lines are you talking about?

MR. JOHNSON: Hydraulic lines in the back of the jet.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Oil flowing into the jets to control the --

MR. WOODY: Okay. And now, getting underway, do you have, is everything running when you get underway? I mean, there is no, everything is --

MR. JOHNSON: We usually shut the generator off, just until we are out of the ice because it doesn't get proper flow, so it usually doesn't overheats because there is an automatic switch for overheat.

MR. WOODY: How long a period is this usually? Saying, getting underway and then how long is it getting back, coming back in --

MR. JOHNSON: Four minutes.

MR. WOODY: Four minutes. Coming back in,

what, I mean --

MR. JOHNSON: Probably the same, but it depends on the current, too, because if the current is coming in, you have less ice up where we dock. If the current is going out, like it was at the time, you have more ice further up, so, as soon as I get into the ice, you know, I have the heat on, you know, get the boat warm and we shut the generator off, running on emergency, you know.

MR. WOODY: You are running on batteries.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: I see. And now, on the bridge, what, is there anything in the way of ship control that is not energized during this time?

MR. JOHNSON: There is only one radar, which is the main radar, which works on 110 -- 208. Other than that, and the pinpoint system, which is just an aide, you really can't use for navigational purposes anyway, it is only an aide to help you. And the captain has his radar, he has full control of the vessel. They are all 24 volt systems. And you have your GPS, which is 24 volts. The only thing that is not there is the mate's radar.

MR. WOODY: The mate's radar.

MR. JOHNSON: Everything is 24 volts.

MR. WOODY: The TV cameras are on, too?

MR. JOHNSON: The cameras, no, they are 120. They are using contact -- radio.

MR. WOODY: So, the mate's radar, the pinpoint system.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: The TV, is there anything else like that that is not running?

MR. JOHNSON: (inaudible)

MR. WOODY: Is there any change --

MR. JOHNSON: You mean the camera to the engine room?

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, that is --

MR. WOODY: Those work on deck, don't they? If you have the TV, do you have a picture on deck as well as in the engine room or is it just --

MR. JOHNSON: They flash on, you know, get all three sites.

MR. WOODY: Let me ask the question. What, what parts of the ship does the TV cameras look at?

MR. JOHNSON: It looks at just the front of the two main engines. You don't get like a wide view. Like a close-up view. You get the two generators. Basically, just a visual view, like -- or anything.

MR. WOODY: So, was run for New York routine?

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: How fast does the boat, when the boat gets out of, clears the ice, how fast does it run?

MR. JOHNSON: Between 32 and 35 miles. Depending on load.

MR. WOODY: You mean the load of the passengers.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Usually on the way up it is light, you know, in the afternoon. In the morning we are loaded up capacity, so it is, depending on the current and wind, but, unloaded we do about 35, 36.

MR. WOODY: Now, how, is there any kind of thing you, is there any kind of a landmark or you approach the ice, or what causes the -- the end result, when you are approaching --

MR. JOHNSON: As soon as we get into the thick ice.

MR. WOODY: As soon as you get into thick ice.

MR. JOHNSON: Visually, I am on the stern of the boat, me and the other engineer, as soon as I visually see that we are going into thick ice.

MR. WOODY: You don't do it before, you do

when you --

MR. JOHNSON: No, right in there. I mean, I try to do it as least possible. And then even if I get into a clear spot in the water, it goes back on.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: It is just in the midst of thick ice, we shut it off. If we don't shut it off, it is going to shut off by itself, overheat.

MR. WOODY: It will overheat.

In this case here, you, was the generators turned off or turned back on when the --

MR. JOHNSON: Just got shut off.

MR. WOODY: They just got shut off.

MR. JOHNSON: Two minute period.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: I could tell by the sound of the muffler of how much water I am not getting or I am getting.

MR. WOODY: I see.

MR. JOHNSON: Even like, a very hollow sound it means we are getting no water.

MR. WOODY: Are you talking about the engine or the generator?

MR. JOHNSON: The generator.

MR. WOODY: All right.

MR. JOHNSON: Means there is no problem.

MR. WOODY: Means no problem.

MR. JOHNSON: I mean, here and there, but we have like a modified system on this boat that we just --

MR. WOODY: I wouldn't mind having you show me that again. Yesterday was the first time I have seen some of that, something like that heating system you have to keep the generator --

MR. JOHNSON: All right.

MR. WOODY: Because that was pretty neat.

MR. JOHNSON: The -- one --

MR. WOODY: Well, the one for the generator.

MR. JOHNSON: The one that we rigged up.

MR. WOODY: Rigged up, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: That was pretty good. It was on the spot.

MR. WOODY: Yes. How are we going to do this?

MR. JOHNSON: We get a bucket, you know.

MR. WOODY: I thought that was --

MR. JOHNSON: You do what you have got to do, you know.

MR. WOODY: Tell us about that again.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, it was his idea. I was thinking of somehow to get water without going through

the generator because we were getting it anyway. I was blowing right through the hose and I could tell we were just getting no water, because I was blowing right through the piping to the outside of the hull. I was saying to myself, how can I get water up here, and I was just trying to brainstorm, but in the midst of that I am going through -- going through this and checking this, you know, so, he said, well, we have got five gallon bucket, do you think that generator is going to draw more than five gallons if I get through submersibles. And I am like, a possibility. So, I said, well, get, we had a big blue tub, you know, like a, just a big blue utility tub. I said, hook the line to a five gallon bucket, I rigged it up down in the engine room. So, we filled that up completely. Took the hose off the intake of where the C strainer is for the generator, stuck that in there. So, I said, turn on the generator, now this is fill now with at least 40 gallons of water.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: So, it gave me time to get the power going and get the submersibles going into that. So, after that happened, it was just that I was able to keep up with --, so we had the power on, turned on the submersibles, so I was pumping water into the bucket

instead of us having to pour it.

MR. WOODY: You had two submersibles?

MR. JOHNSON: Two submersibles. They are 110s, that is why I had get the power --

MR. WOODY: Generator to feed them.

MR. JOHNSON: Catch 22 in a way.

MR. WOODY: Yes, indeed.

MR. JOHNSON: Get that thing going.

MR. WHITE: Did you have keep turning them off and on, the submersibles?

MR. JOHNSON: No, it actually, for some reason it just worked perfectly, where I never, it never went up and it never went down. I had like this much water on the bottom and it was sucking, and those two were able to keep. One wouldn't have worked, that would have started that one out without water. It worked. It was just one of those things that happened to work out, you know, in a bad situation.

MR. WOODY: How long after the grounding did you get this thing back on line? How long did it take you to hook this up?

MR. JOHNSON: About an hour and a half.

MR. WOODY: About an hour.

MR. JOHNSON: I had one on. I was letting them burning out. I would turn them on just to get

heat on the boat for maybe like three or four minutes that I could run, you know, the generator without water, you know, overheat, the propeller is going to burn out. It was going to shut off by itself. And I had to get the generator going just enough time to get heat back on the boat, and to make announcements by the Captain. So, you need the 110 for the intercom [PA] systems, you know, making out.

MR. WOODY: So, when you got the generator running in this fashion, you had two submersible pumps.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: You had two hoses coming down.

MR. JOHNSON: Coming into the back hatch where the generator is, not the main hatch, this one all the way in the stern.

MR. WOODY: Is this starboard or port generator?

MR. JOHNSON: Port generator.

MR. WOODY: Port generator. Okay. And you had to section off the --

MR. JOHNSON: Section off the pump. Not from the pump, the pump going down to the C strainer.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: I had that coming off of there and into the bucket, bending into the bucket.

MR. WOODY: A section in the bucket.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WOODY: Did you make any --

MR. JOHNSON: Running great.

MR. WOODY: Running great.

MR. JOHNSON: I had no problems. No over heat or nothing. And that was, we had that on a good three hours.

MR. WOODY: Okay. That is a fascinating story. It is fantastic.

MR. JOHNSON: What do you do, you know?

MR. WOODY: Well, that is, that is pretty great.

Okay. Where were you at when the vessel grounded? Were you down in the --

MR. JOHNSON: I was in the port engine room monitoring.

MR. WOODY: Did you lean forward, did you lose your balance or anything like that?

MR. JOHNSON: No, because I am usually holding on to the system regardless anyway, because it is only a small, about six inches wide, so I am always holding on here, one hand on the back, just --

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: And honestly, it didn't even

feel that bad. I thought it was like thick ice that we were just tumbling into, because sometimes it does feel like that, you can feel it jump. So, I said, oh, it is thick ice up there. That is what is exactly what I said to myself, and I went, ran up and I am looking and I am like, we ain't moving, so there is definitely a problem. I thought it was the ice at first, I am like, it is that thick. And then I looked around, and I was like, I guess we have got a problem.

MR. WOODY: Now, we have heard somebody say that one of, your power, when you were aground was that you don't have a power stern to back up, is that --

MR. JOHNSON: Less power stern.

MR. WOODY: Less power sterns.

MR. JOHNSON: It is not as efficient.

MR. WOODY: Now, was the, which side of the ground was this, was it starboard side?

MR. JOHNSON: I believe it was the starboard side, maybe not fully grounded, but --

MR. WOODY: No, just --

MR. JOHNSON: I think it was the starboard side because as the tide went down, the starboard pontoon was out.

MR. WOODY: Was out.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I couldn't get a prime on

the jet, because we were out of the water so much.

MR. WOODY: How do you get a prime, does it come in the front someway and go through or --

MR. JOHNSON: Under the, there is a big tube that runs underneath.

MR. WOODY: Underneath.

MR. JOHNSON: About, maybe six, six, seven meters in, and then that is, you have your big propeller, which sucks from the bottom. But, if you are out of the water and your propeller is here, like the middle of your propeller is here and the water is down here, you can't get a prime.

MR. WOODY: You can't get a prime.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, too much air in there. So, that was the whole reason. But, 401 we had prime the whole time.

MR. WOODY: I see.

MR. JOHNSON: Kept it going because I didn't want to, you know, in case we could move, at least we wanted to have one. If we lost that one, I told to deflush that one, we didn't lose it initially, we lost it after the tide went down and the engine was overheating, because of lack of water.

MR. WOODY: The main engine --

MR. JOHNSON: Starboard main.

MR. WOODY: The starboard main engine.

MR. WOODY: Starboard main.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, it was getting a little hot, so I told them to punch it out, I took control of it in the engine room, you know, RPM wise, you know, I cleared up the system, you know, the valves that we have, and the temperature started dropping. I gave it to the Captain to try to punch it back in and that is when I knew -- because we were out of the water.

MR. WOODY: So, let's see now. When you observed the -- that means you had all the services on the boat.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. WOODY: And which is the heating and blowers and everything.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. WOODY: Lights. Did you have any other shortages, fresh water and things like that?

MR. JOHNSON: Fresh water stopped, and the toilets wouldn't flush.

MR. WOODY: Okay. Why did it stop, did you run short or turned off or --

MR. JOHNSON: (inaudible)

MR. WOODY: You said the toilets wouldn't flush.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, they don't flush, but you can still use them for peeing.

MR. WOODY: Well --

MR. JOHNSON: It is one of those things that passengers kind of know what we are doing, because we used to make announcements like, look it is going to get dark in here for a minute, we are just doing this until, you know, we have emergency lighting on all of the boat.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: And see all these lights here, 24 volt, half of them, half of the lights are 24 volts. And it is official lighting.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Upstairs and down, you have to have lighting, you know, so we tell them, they kind of got into the deal where they know, and when we get three minutes from the dock, nobody goes to the bathroom anyway. They are all waiting --

MR. WOODY: But, after you got, after you got the generator back on line, using this bucket method.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, when we first went aground, the jets cleaning up the water, I turned the generator back on, because it was clean water and it was working because the tide was up a little, a little

bit. So, after about an hour, aw, maybe a half hour being aground we lost suction because the tide was dropping and we were into sand. That is when we had to come up with the idea of the bucket.

MR. WOODY: That was, now, when you first, you were using the starboard generator or --

MR. JOHNSON: Starboard generator.

MR. WOODY: Starboard generator, all right.

MR. JOHNSON: The reason I used the port generator for the bucket system is because the pump is closest to the exiting hatch, so it was a lot easier to get the hoses right over. It was coming right over the rail into the bucket, instead of having to go, the starboard one is facing the other way.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: It is facing into the engine room. So, it would have been a lot more work, haul the hoses down, haul the bucket down, so that is why we used the port generator because it is right there.

MR. WOODY: Okay. Now, the ship had a list of port.

MR. JOHNSON: You couldn't even really feel it. It was this much difference between the port pontoon and the starboard.

MR. WOODY: But, the section you had prime

with your port.

MR. JOHNSON: Port had prime.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: But, the thing is, if you have a prime, you keep it usually, it is hard to lose it unless, I mean, you are out of the water.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: But, when you stop and try it again, because you may not get, you know what I am saying?

MR. WOODY: I do, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: The starboard one I had to take out through the -- so, that is how it was on the prime. It was primed before that, but when I took the time to flush it out, then we lost it completely. It is like a vacuum. You lose your vacuum --

MR. WOODY: Got you.

Okay. After you got the port generator restored with using the -- the pumps provide water to the bucket that you -- Okay, was any other shortages on the ship such as fresh water? Or did that give you --

MR. JOHNSON: You have, we lost fresh water from the main tank, the 350 gallon tank and that gets pumped into the boat. After we got that going, I saw that the water was, we had only like -- gallons, so we

had a 150 gallons in front of surplus.

MR. WOODY: These are in drums?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, they are in these drums.

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: And what we did is, since we were using submersibles to get the generator going, we had to find another way of getting the water from the drums to the tank. So, we took a gallon milk, cut it out, cut the bottom out, made a funnel, stuck it inside to where the fresh water gets put in, and we took a five gallon bucket and we were just pouring it right in.

MR. WOODY: I see.

MR. JOHNSON: And that was a 150 gallon tank. And that --

MR. WOODY: How, how, at the rate you using the water, how long, how many hours could you have gone?

MR. JOHNSON: Not much more.

MR. WOODY: Not much more.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. WOODY: So, the only shortage you had was fresh water.

MR. JOHNSON: Right, right. But, it was not drinking, it was just -- That is the only --

MR. WOODY: As far as drinking, you have bottled water for that, I presume.

MR. JOHNSON: We ran out of water after awhile.

MR. WOODY: Oh, you did.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, and plus we stopped serving alcohol that is what the Coast Guard said, in case anybody had to be lifted off the boat, they don't want anybody --

MR. WOODY: Did you have soft drink service?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, but that is froze up. We lost that due to the water.

MR. WOODY: Due to the water.

MR. JOHNSON: And that hasn't been working for awhile, you know, Coca Cola is suppose to come in and fix that. I don't know --

MR. WOODY: Okay.

MR. WHITE: I want to clarify just a couple of things that I got confused when I talked to the other guys.

The fresh water system, the portable water, I guess.

MR. JOHNSON: Potable water.

MR. WHITE: Potable water. That is strictly through the heads.

MR. JOHNSON: No.

MR. WHITE: For the --

MR. JOHNSON: The heads use the same water supply as the soda machines and whatever else.

MR. WHITE: It has nothing to do the engine machinery.

MR. JOHNSON: No, the engine machinery is complete dependent on itself, and it uses ocean water.

MR. WHITE: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Sea water.

MR. WHITE: Well, sea water, and all that.

Okay. So, as far as running out of fresh water --

MR. JOHNSON: It wouldn't have been critical or an emergency, you know.

MR. WHITE: It would not have affected the engines --

MR. JOHNSON: No, no.

MR. WHITE: Nothing like that.

MR. JOHNSON: No machinery would have been affected. The only thing affected is the heads at that time.

MR. WHITE: Let me jump back to the generators.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

MR. WHITE: On a routine basis, let's say you hadn't gone aground. Let's say you were just coming in normal. Who decides, first off, do you have both generators on?

MR. JOHNSON: No, just one at a time. You can only run on one, either way.

MR. WHITE: Yes. You don't have a way to split the --

MR. JOHNSON: No.

MR. WHITE: Who decides when to shut it off?

MR. JOHNSON: Either me or the other engineer will shut it off.

MR. WHITE: Do you inform the captain?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I tell the captain, I tell the captain.

MR. WHITE: How do you tell him? Normally through the radio?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I just tell him, Ed, you are going to lose, if I am in the wheelhouse at the time and I see the ice coming, I am like "Ed, when we get into the ice", or whoever the captain may be, I will say, we are shutting the generator down, and he goes all right. He is prepared. He knows exactly what to do.

MR. WHITE: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: If he told me don't shut the generators off, I wouldn't.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: I would let it burn out itself. We work with each other, you know, we all communicate. It is not like it is just shut off.

MR. WHITE: Who makes the decision as to which generator you --

MR. JOHNSON: There really is no decision. I usually alternate them every day. You know, keep the hours the same, you know, the services up.

MR. WHITE: Normally you won't switch one to the other.

MR. JOHNSON: No, not on the same run. If I am using one that day, I will stick to it. I don't switch.

MR. WHITE: There is no particular reason to use one versus the other.

MR. JOHNSON: The starboard was being used because that was just the choice that day.

MR. WHITE: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: And then we went to the port, like I told you, because it was just a lot easier for the bucket.

MR. WHITE: Yes. But, there was no mechanical

problem with the port previously.

MR. JOHNSON: No.

MR. WHITE: And that was why you were using the starboard.

MR. JOHNSON: No. No problem. But, like I said, though we couldn't use the starboard anyway because at the time that was the pontoon that was more aground than the port.

MR. WHITE: How did the PA system sound to you when you have the generators on? Does it work normally?

MR. JOHNSON: The PA was fine, yeah, loud, everybody could hear, although through out the boat. Every speaker we had, it flowed through every one of them.

MR. WHITE: Is there any kind of check you ever do on the speakers to make sure they all work?

MR. JOHNSON: The crew in the cabin, if they, if the captain makes an announcement, and it is not loud enough, they will say, you know, a little low, a little high, you know, everybody uses it. I mean, we make the announcements when we were going to slow, it is the most quiet on the boat. When you are hooked up, you know, meaning when you are full throttle, it is hard to hear, you know, water noise, just people talking. You can always hear. But, you know, we

usually tell the captain too low or too high, but it is usually always the same. Nobody really messes with it because it is underneath. It is not like it is visible and everybody playing with it. Everybody can hear it. Everybody was working fine that day. I heard it.

MR. WOODY: And with the generators back on, the PA was working.

MR. JOHNSON: Right. It was working. I was making verbal announcements, too, as I was getting information. I was telling the people by mouth, what is going upstairs --

MR. WHITE: Were you up in the bridge at all during the evolution, I mean, pretty much --

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I was, I had an irate passengers two times, calm them down. And then I was up there --

MR. WHITE: Irate?

MR. JOHNSON: Meaning he was getting a little out of hand.

MR. WHITE: Around here or up in the bridge?

MR. JOHNSON: Up in the bridge. When we were doing the helicopter, you know, the helicopter lift, I was telling the mate to turn off one of the radars, and he was saying, I need help down here, I have got a guy ready to throw fits. So, I ran down. He was just

being, you know, nobody is telling us what is going on, you know, yelling at the guy, just being uncooperative, you know, giving a pretty bad time. So, I said, what is your, I just said, what is your problem, sir. Talk to me, you know, don't yell. And he said, this guy is an idiot. This is guy is an f-ing this, f-ing that.

MR. WHITE: This is the guy being hoisted off?

MR. JOHNSON: No, no, this is --

MR. WHITE: Somebody else.

MR. JOHNSON: I said, look, I go, I can't make an announcement right now, because the generator is off, I go, we are in the middle helicoptering the guy off that is sick. I go, the captain is doing what he can do, talking to the Coast Guard. I go, we are doing, everybody is doing what they can in this situation. I go, we are all here stuck together. Just calm down. And I am going to make an announcement in about three minutes. He goes, all right, no problem, I am sorry. And he calmed down.

And then there was another guy about a couple hours later just wanted to know what was going to on and I had to calm him down, too. But, a lot of people, they know me, so.

MR. WHITE: Did you know these guys?

MR. JOHNSON: The one guy I knew. The second

guy I knew. The first guy he was like a British guy or Australian or something. He was, it was just a matter of talking to him instead of, I guess --

MR. WHITE: So, when the helo came in, came into do it, that was before you gerry rigged the generator?

MR. JOHNSON: No generator then.

MR. WHITE: Yes. Any problem with lighting on the outside?

MR. JOHNSON: No, we have, on the mast we have some spotlights that work off 24 volts.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: And they were on.

MR. WHITE: No problem with the engine as far as its generating capability for 24 volts?

MR. JOHNSON: No, we have alternators on it. We have got alternators on both --

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: One works for the start of motors, one works for the house -- You can interlock them, too, if you have a problem.

MR. WHITE: Yes. Okay.

One thing I was going to ask you, what I was leading to when I asked you if you had been up on the bridge. The one guy who was hoisted off, had a little

bit of conflicting information. Did he get sick before the whole thing happened?

MR. JOHNSON: No, he, from what I understand, I don't know exactly when he came up to the cabin, but before we got into the ice, the captain said, actually one of the deck hands told me, "The Captain is trying to call you." That is when I went and got on the radio. I said, "What is it, Ed?" He said, "Come up to the bridge, you and Scott right away." I said, "All right." We weren't in the ice yet, so I know it wasn't from the ice. I went up to the bridge, and he said, this guy here is sick. I have got to get him to the back of the boat, you know, this way he can be the first person off because paramedics are waiting for him. I said, no problem. Me and Scott took him to back, put him in the auxiliary room. He waited there, so he could be the first one off the boat, you know, the paramedics were going to be there. So, it wasn't from this. It had nothing to do with that.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: He was sick.

MR. WHITE: But, he wasn't on the bridge when you actually ran aground.

MR. JOHNSON: No, he was down in the back of the boat. He was in the auxiliary room, which is on

the --

MR. WOODY: Is there two auxiliary room?

MR. JOHNSON: There is one. He was in there.

MR. WHITE: I made an assumption and it is probably not right, then. When you come in and tie up, where do you normally discharge and load passengers from?

MR. JOHNSON: With the ice, we have been coming in in the afternoon, starboard side, this way we can come, tight at the back, instead of having to crush ice, because when you are bringing a boat in, you can't do it because the ice is keeping you out. So, you come in tight as we can to the dock, and the boat is closest to the pier. We go in starboard side.

MR. WHITE: Okay. In normal off both ends, off just --

MR. JOHNSON: Up the bough at 34th Street is loading and Pier 11 in New York is starboard side. And here, or up there, when we come back with the ice, as far as, usually fair weather or clear water, we come around to the port, the back.

MR. WOODY: So, normally you do port side --

MR. JOHNSON: Just so when you pull out, you don't --

MR. WOODY: What is the advantage of going

port side?

MR. JOHNSON: No advantage, just, well, you are facing where you are going, you know. Plus, you know, it is the way we started --

MR. WHITE: So, when you come in port side, you have got to turn when you come into the dock.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, we come up and round up and come in.

MR. WHITE: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: Because that is the way we have the line set up when we first started. You know, we have the line, we don't throw lines. The lines are set up -- come right in. But, last year, with the ice we set up a starboard, so we can come right in and ran that line, and made the dock sufficient to where people can get off.

MR. WOODY: Both ends?

MR. JOHNSON: Both, well, port, starboard.

MR. WOODY: Port, starboard.

Let's see, if you come into the ice, you tie starboard side.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

(Pause.)

MR. WHITE: So, basically the only advantage to starboard then is you don't have turn, so you don't

have to worry about getting the ice --

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, because usually, this way you are coming right in directly from the channel, and you get in tight to the dock. This way, you know, your stern isn't stuck out from the ice, it is coming -- You know, it is hard to turn with that ice, too, like I said. If you wanted to round up to go port, you can't do it sometimes. The ice just prevents you from doing that. It is not like a wheel boat.

MR. WOODY: Yes.

MR. WHITE: That is about all I have.

Anything that you saw as far as a problem with the passengers at all, other than the two?

MR. JOHNSON: Just those two guys, I mean, other than that I think the situation went as good as it can go. I mean, everybody was pretty -- A lot of them, 80 percent of the people I know, not personally, but they know me. They know who I am. They know my name and I know a lot of them. So, I mean, I guess they saw a familiar face, so it wasn't as bad. I was trying to keep, I was, I was cracking jokes here and there, you know, trying to just lighten everybody up. But, I was, that was my first aground. I think it was my first real incident on one of these boats.

MR. WHITE: I am glad you mentioned, there is

one other, what kind of training have you had in emergency, you know, either drills or emergencies?

MR. JOHNSON: We do drills with the captain as required. And I have done Coast Guard drills, man overboard drills, fire drills, you know, I went to school, you know, I have a master license. I have learned, I went to sea school to get my license. I learned a lot about fire fighting.

MR. WHITE: What kind of drills have you actually done, you have done a man overboard drill for instance on here?

MR. JOHNSON: Not in a while. I don't know, I haven't personally, but I don't know because I am not on the boat every day. A lot of times I work nights or I am working on the other boat. But, I know they get done, they are logged. They are required.

MR. WHITE: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: But, I mean, I am pretty up to speed with everything. I started out on decks, so I was always doing it. But, we did a Coast Guard drill with a dummy, and we did that in very good time. Everybody is pretty, pretty good crew.

MR. WHITE: You say when you do the Coast Guard drill, is that actually under way when you go back and pick them up?

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, we, after our runs in the morning, at couple of Coast Guard guys jump on, they said, act like you were acting as if it was a regular day. So we are all walking around the cabin, and all of a sudden they just throw a dummy overboard.

MR. WHITE: At the dock?

MR. JOHNSON: No, we were in B Ridge Flat.

(Change of tape.)

MR. WOODY: Where did you bring --

MR. JOHNSON: Bough, the bough. Because we don't want to do it on the stern -- it is easier to maneuver, like you use hands -- to the captain, up, over and like that.

MR. WOODY: Can we take a real quick --

MR. WHITE: The only thing I was going to ask was, suppose if this had happened to where they couldn't have gotten, let's say there had been a damage to the hull.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WHITE: You found only rock was probably sitting out there or something like that or how do you think everybody would have gotten off?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I would have to manually put the lifeboat --

MR. WHITE: Even though they were rafts.

MR. JOHNSON: Right. There was, if there is a 300, over 300 people on there, I would have had to manually put them out, have everybody down life jackets and put them out on the man overboard ladder. That is the only way --

MR. WHITE: That is what, that man overboard ladder, is that always sitting on top?

MR. JOHNSON: That is a Jacobs ladder. We have got that one, and we have another one, too, and it is right on the back. A regular ladder, platform.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: But, I would have used both, whatever is quicker.

MR. WHITE: Let's say the other ferry was running, the other boat was running.

MR. JOHNSON: Right.

MR. WHITE: How, if you had to transfer from one to other, how would you do that?

MR. JOHNSON: We tie up side by side.

MR. WHITE: -- compatible enough to be able to do that.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, we do it all the time. When we fuel up on the other boat, we are always side by side. Two lines in the front, two lines in the back and they stay tight. Ramp over, and get them out. It

would have worked.

MR. WHITE: -- the other company's boats?

MR. JOHNSON: I mean, I mean, they probably could.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Worse case scenario.

MR. WHITE: Or if they had a problem, you would go --

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, if you need help, you know, it is people, you know, it is not competition when it comes down to people's lives.

MR. WHITE: Right. It is just taking people to work.

MR. JOHNSON: Right. The buck stops, you know, when people are in trouble.

MR. WHITE: Okay. You wanted to look at one more thing you said.

MR. WOODY: Yes, I would like to see you put that bucket.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

(Tape ended.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before: NTSB

In the Matter of:

LIVE TAPES

were held as herein appears and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the Department, Commission, Administrative Law Judge or the Agency.

EXECUTIVE COURT REPORTERS, INC.
1320 Fenwick Lane, Suite 702
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 565-0064

Official Reporter

Dated: JAN. 4, 2001